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BAKER'S EDITION OF PLAYS

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CHUMS

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Plays for Amateur Theatricals.

BY GEORGE M. BAKER.

Author of "Amateur Dramas," "The Mimic Stage," "The Social Stage," "The Drawing-Room Stage," "Handy Dramas," "The Exhibition Dramas," "A Baker's Dozen," etc.

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Shall Our Mothers Vote? 11 char. 15
GENTLEMEN OF THE JURY. 12 char. . . 15
HUMORS OF THE STRIKE. 8 char. . . . 15
MY UNCLE THE CAPTAIN. 6 char. . . . 15
NEW BROOMS SWEEP CLEAN. 6 char. . 15
THE GREAT ELIXIR. 9 char. 15
THE HYPOCHONDRIAC. 3 char. 15
The Man with the Demijohn. 4 char. 15
THE RUNAWAYS. 4 char. 15
THE THIEF OF TIME. 6 char. 15
WANTED, A MALE COOK. 4 char. . . . 15

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A PRECIOUS PICKLE. 6 char. 15
NO CURE NO PAY. 7 char. 15
THE CHAMPION OF HER SEX. 8 char. . 15
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THE GRECIAN BEND. 7 char. 15
THE RED CHIGNON. 6 char. 15
USING THE WEED. 7 char. 15

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TOO LATE FOR THE TRAIN. 2 male char. 15
THE VISIONS OF FREEDOM. 11 female char. 15

WALTER H. BAKER & CO., 23 Winter St., Boston

CHUMS

A FARCE IN ONE ACT

BY THE AUTHOR OF "CLASS DAY"

Francis H. Hoar

Originally played by Graduate Members of the Pi Eta Society of Harvard College, at Beethoven Hall, Boston, Tuesday Evening, Feb. 29, 1876.

35095

BOSTON

Walter H. Baker & Co.

1891

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CHARACTERS.

MR. BREED . . . . . *A Vermont Squire*

HARRY BREED, A.B., Harv., *His Son*,
TOM BURNHAM, *Leading Lady of the Pi Eta Theatre* } . . *Chums*

FLORA STRONG . . . . . *Mr. Breed's niece*

MRS. BREED.

Time, the present day. *Season*, summer.

Time in representation, forty-five minutes.

COSTUMES.

MR. BREED. — "Daniel Webster" coat, yellow vest, check trousers.

MRS. BREED. — Black silk, apron, cap.

Others, modern and appropriate.

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CHUMS.

SCENE. — *Sitting-room at* MR. BREED'S, *in Breedville, Vt. Practical windows at back. Two doors* R. *Door* L. *front;* L. *in middle of wing. Fire-place and mantel with ornaments. At centre of room a table. Flower-stand between windows. Bird-cage, chairs, ottomans, books, flowers, etc.*

At rise of curtain MRS. BREED *is discovered arranging room.*

MRS. BREED. There, everything is as tidy as can be. I don't see what has got into father. He's done nothing but run out of the house, and run in again all the morning. One would think the President of the United States was coming to visit us, and not our Harry coming home from college. (*Enter* BREED, R.)

BREED. It's coming, mother. It's coming!

MRS. B. What's coming?

BR. Why, the coach, to be sure. I just saw it coming over the top of the hill. In a few minutes he'll be here. (*Cross to window.*)

MRS. B. Well, I must say, father, you are in a prodigious fidget. One would think the boy had been away for a lifetime. See how calm I am. (*Dusting vigorously.*)

BR. But, mother, it is two years since he spent a vacation at home. Last summer, you know, he went with his chum, Mr. Burnham. At any rate, if his mother isn't impatient to see him, his father can — Hark! there's the gate. He's (*enter Harry with satchel and duster*) — Why, Harry, my dear boy, how de do, how de do! (*Shakes him by the hand vigorously, causing satchel and duster to fly about.*)

HARRY. Right as a trivet, father, and thoroughly glad to be back among the Green Mountains once more. Mother. (*Embraces and kisses her.*)

MRS. B. Welcome home, Harry.

BR. Here, give me your satchel; you must be very tired. There, sit down, sit down. (*Pushes him into a chair. Gives satchel and duster to* MRS. B., *who puts them away;* BR. *and* MRS. B. *sit.*)

HARRY. Oh, no, not tired a bit. The ride was exhilarating. What a rum driver you've got on the coach now.

BR. Rum? I never heard that he drank.

HARRY. Oh, no, dad! That was only college slang. I mean he's odd, funny, you know.

MRS. B. Of course, any one could see he meant that, father.

BR. Oh, yes! I believe he is what you might call eccentric. But, Harry, tell us all about yourself. What have you been doing?

HARRY. Why, I wrote you.

BR. Yes, I know, very interesting, very, but they related more to matters of finance than general information. What I want to know is —

MRS. B. (*interrupting*). What you have learned, Harry? How you've spent these last two years?

BR. In fact, all about your college life?

HARRY. Why, there isn't much to tell. We have pretty much the same life all the time. We eat, sleep, smoke, and dig; that is, those who don't trot.

BR. Dig? Bless me, I didn't know that at Harvard agriculture —

HARRY (*interrupting*). Hold on, dad; when I say dig, I only mean study hard. College term, you know. And by "trot" I mean use a pony.

MRS. B. But for men grown, like you, I should think a horse —

HARRY (*interrupting*). Oh, dear, oh, dear! A pony, mother, in college is a translation — a book to save lazy fellows work.

BR. Of course, of course; any one could see he meant that, mother.

HARRY. You see nearly all the fast set trot.

BR. Quite natural, quite natural. But speaking of fast men, I can't tell you how glad I am, my boy, to know that

you have shunned the temptations that beset the young away from home. I feared you might be led to drink, or play billiards, or that you might be prevailed upon to enter a theatre. But I see you've come back untarnished.

HARRY. Well, but, father, I'm not so awfully good, you know. Hard students like myself need a little amusement, a little time to — to — as the poet says, "*Desipere in loco, desipere in loco.*"

MRS. B. "*Desipere in loco.*" How he has learned! I suppose that means dissipate at home, Harry. Chess, or a good story like "Pilgrim's Progress," or "The Children of the Abbey"?

HARRY (*aside*). And Schoeffel! (*Aloud*). Yes — precisely —

BR. Oh, Harry! I know how you have spent your leisure time, I know!

HARRY (*aside*). The devil he does!

BR. Yes, I know. You haven't written, but I have heard from some of my neighbors who have seen you in Boston. Ah, yes, I know it's not chess, or Bunyan, that you've devoted your time to.

HARRY (*alarmed*). But what have they said, sir? I —

BR. They said, — I can't tell you how pleased I was to hear, — that, instead of going to the theatre, you gave your time to art and literature.

HARRY (*puzzled*). To art? To literature?

BR. Yes; Deacon Wilder was down to buy his goods last winter, and he said he saw you at the Athenæum.

MRS. B. Yes, he told us all about it.

BR. I remember the Athenæum well. I went there once myself. Beautiful library, fine pictures — fine pictures! But why did they change the name?

HARRY (*puzzled*). Change the name?

BR. Why, yes; when I was there it used to be the Boston Athenæum, but the deacon called it the *Howard* Athenæum. Is it in honor of the great philanthropist?

HARRY (*confused*). Why, you see — the fact is — I — (*Recovering.*) The artists whose performances are to be seen at the Howard are of a more modern school. There's more variety there; while the Boston, as when you were there, contains the *old* masters.

BR. Oh, yes! I see, I see! And I know all about your swimming, too, sly fellow. You thought to surprise us, but you won't.

HARRY. Swimming — well, of course, I was rather in the swim, as we say, but I really don't —

MRS. B. (*interrupting*). Don't pretend to modesty now, we know.

BR. Yes, you remember, Harry, Sam Sprague visited you, and when he came home —

HARRY (*aside; going to front*). If Sam went back on me, I'll murder him!

BR. (*coming after;* MRS. B. *also*). I thought I'd ask him about you. It wasn't quite fair, but I knew you were all right. I said to Sam, said I, Does Harry ever play billiards?

HARRY (*aside*). Pocketed! by Jove!

BR. "Play billiards?" said Sam, "play billiards? why, he spends half his time at the pool-room." "Does he?" said I, "does he? Dear boy, I suppose he'll be quite a Captain Webb when he comes home."

HARRY (*relieved; sitting. All sit*). Oh, no, father! The fact is, I had to give up the pool, for *wet* games are so expensive.

BR. Well, well, we'll talk of that another time. (*Soberly.*) But, Harry, there was one thing that Sprague told me that grieved me much.

MRS. B. Yes, grieved us much. (*Wiping eyes.*)

BR. He told me that you spent very many of your evenings at Parker's.

HARRY (*aside; groaning*). Oh, Lord! It's coming now!

BR. Your mother and I have lain awake nights, thinking of your being possibly at Parker's, and under his awful influence.

MRS. B. Awful influence.

HARRY (*excited; rising*). But, sir!

BR. (*rising*). Harry, I tell you that Theodore Parker is little better than an infidel, and for my son —

HARRY (*relieved; interrupting*). My dear father, I assure you, I haven't changed my creed. (*Aside.*) Nor my credit. (*They sit.*)

MRS. B. I'm glad to hear it, Harry, glad to hear it.

HARRY. And you mustn't believe too much of what Sam Sprague says, for he was on his beer most all the time he was in Boston.

MRS. B. On his bier! How very odd. I've heard of old people sleeping in their coffins, but for a young man —

HARRY. I mean that he drank beer, very much beer, and didn't always know what he was about.

BR. What a dreadful thing! I'm glad you don't drink, Harry. I don't mind smoking so much, but drinking is a detestable vice.

MRS. B. Detestable vice.

HARRY. Yes, I know it, I know it. (*Rising.*) But I want to run out and see the farm, — get a snuff of pure Vermont air before dinner. It's as good as a cocktail.

MRS. B. A cocktail! Why, we're going to have a whole turkey.

HARRY (*hurriedly*). Yes, I know; but by-the-way, what time do you have grub?

BR. In May, Harry, in May. They're all gone now. You'll find plenty of angle-worms down at the old place. But you won't go a-fishing to-day?

HARRY. No, no! grub is college slang for food; dinner, you know.

BR. (*with dignity*). Harry, I wish you would try and use more appropriate words. I am aware that John the Baptist lived upon locusts; but in the nineteenth century the word grub does not suggest food. We dine at one.

MRS. B. Yes, and I must go and look after that turkey; it needs basting. (*Exit* L.)

BR. And I'll go and see about some garden truck. I remember your fondness for greens. (*Exit* L.)

HARRY. Whew! if I haven't had a series of sensations. Talk of cold keys down your back; why, it was a whole sheet anchor chain, and every link gave me a chill. But I'm all safe. They don't know of my little larks, and if Tom, whom I've invited to spend a few weeks with me, don't let the cat out of the bag, I shall be all right. By Jove! it's such a relief, I'd almost dance out of very joy. (*Dances at front; enter* MR. B., L., *glasses on top of his head.*)

BR. Where did I leave my specs? (*Seeing* HARRY.) Why, Harry, what's the matter?

HARRY (*confused*). Why, I — you see, my foot got asleep, and then I had a cramp, and so —

BR. Let me run and get some opodeldoc, or — I know — your mother's got some balm-of-Gilead. (*Going.*)

HARRY (*stopping him by coat-tails*). No, no! don't go! I'm all right now. Cramp is gone.

BR. Now we are alone, Harry, I want to speak to you

about one thing on which I've set my heart. Now sit down, and I'll tell you. (*They sit.*)

HARRY. Well, sir.

BR. Well, you know I've given you a good education. It's about all I can do for you. The farm won't much more than support us old people, and you won't want to be a farmer. Tell me, what have you directed your attention to this last year? (*Warn bell.*)

HARRY. Why, physics, chiefly.

BR. Physic; well, it's a noble profession, but it don't pay. I had hoped the law —

HARRY (*interrupting*). You misunderstand. Physics, not physic, — chemistry, natural philosophy, etc. I haven't thought of a profession yet.

BR. Ah! well, then we'll say the law. But it'll be a long time before you are earning much, and you'll want money. Now there is one sound maxim, "If you haven't been fortunate in the selection of a father, be judicious in the selection of a father-in-law."

HARRY. But I have been fortunate, so there is no occasion to be judicious.

BR. Thank you, Harry, thank you; but I see farther and clearer than you do. You must splice.

HARRY. Splice?

BR. Yes, in our Vermont slang, that means marry. Now I know just the girl.

HARRY. But, sir!

BR. Wait; you want in a wife (*counting on fingers*) first, money; second, education; third, beauty.

HARRY. How about love?

BR. Pshaw, that's what your mother says. That will come in time. Now your cousin, Hepsibah Strong, has one hundred thousand dollars clear, has been at school and Vassar College, and is just the girl to make you a good wife.

HARRY. But about the beauty?

BR. I haven't seen her for many years, but if there is anything in the promise of childhood, she is lovely.

HARRY. Well, how did you do? You didn't marry for money, nor for scholarship, — I can't say about beauty.

BR. Ahem! That doesn't enter into the case. I have set my heart on this match.

HARRY. Well, to be frank with you, I don't like it. I can earn my money. I don't care so very much for beauty, and as for learning, I do hate a blue-stocking.

BR. But she may wear white. May wear white, Harry, or striped ; I've heerd tell they're all the go now, — and I tell you, I will have it.

HARRY. And I tell you, I won't have it. I'll have love, or nothing.

BR. Say love and nothing! There, there, we won't quarrel on your first day home. Think it over, Harry, think it over. Go and see the cows and calves, the calves. That'll make you think of love — that is, sensible love — one hundred thousand dollars clear. Go now, after dinner we'll talk again ; as for beauty, well, she'll be here soon. I've invited her to spend the summer. Now go along, go along. (*Pushes him off.*) Oh, he'll come round. He must, once let me get her here. (*Bell outside.*) This may be she. (*Enter* TOM BURNHAM, R., *in female costume.*)

TOM (*falsetto voice always, except when alone or with* HARRY). I beg pardon, no one answered the bell, I ventured to walk in. This is Mr. Breed's ?

BR. Yes, my dear niece, it is. I needn't ask your name. Your likeness to your father tells me who you are. You are right welcome. (*Kisses him ; aside.*) Harry must like that.

TOM (*embarrassed*). Yes, I — I should like to see Harry.

BR. Of course you would, of course. You know your father's wish. But he will be here soon ; lay off your things, and I'll go and find him. But, Hepsibah —

TOM (*puzzled*). Hepsibah ?

BR. Yes, or do they call you Hepsy ? Anyhow, I want to tell you, you mustn't expect to find Harry a rough, roystering fellow, because he has been to college. He's very modest ; in fact, bashful, and if he seems cold or unsympathetic, it is only his way, you know, only his way. He's all right at the heart. He's very fond of you, indeed he is. I'll go and find him. (*Exit* L.)

TOM (*natural voice*). Well, upon my soul! Here I come to spend a week or two with Harry, and just for a lark came in female attire, relics of the society theatricals, and I am received with open arms, find I am expected ; in fact, a niece, and my name is Hepsibah. Harry, too, is modest, cold, — ha, ha! — well, he's undergone a change in the last week, if that's the case. What the deuce does it all mean ? I wish he would come. Niece — now let me see. (*Retires to window ; enter* HARRY, L.)

HARRY. Mother says her name is Hepsibah. Now who could love a woman named Hepsibah? How could a man make a pet name of that? Hepsy, bah! suggests dyspepsy. Her last name is Strong. If I were a freshman, I should say probably Strong-minded. However, Strong she shall remain to the end of her days, for all me. (*Seeing Tom.*) Hulloa! a female! Probably my cousin. Humph, what a figure! Well, "*Laissez faire*" is my motto, and lazy fair she looks. (*Takes book from table, and looks at it.*)

TOM (*turning; seeing* HARRY). Hulloa! there's Harry! Harry! (*Falsetto voice.*)

HARRY (*aside*). "Harry;" how disgustingly familiar!

TOM (*falsetto*). Cousin Harry! Dear cousin Harry.

HARRY (*aside*). This is perfectly sickening. (*Not looking up.*)

TOM (*naturally*). Come, now (*hitting him*), wake up!!!

HARRY (*electrified; turning*). Well, by all that's wonderful, Tom Burnham! How did you come here in this rig? Explain!

TOM. Explain, — I like that. Didn't you invite me? Explain yourself. How is it that I suddenly discover myself to be your cousin, cousin Hepsibah, and that you are cold, modest, etc., etc.?

HARRY. By Jove! dad has mistaken you for the real cousin. Tom (*tragically*), I am on the verge of despair. Misery stares me in the face.

TOM. Let it stare. It'll be the first thing that ever looked you out of countenance.

HARRY. No, without jesting, I am threatened with — with —matrimony!!!

TOM. Good Lord! you don't say so. Who's your mash?

HARRY. She isn't a mash at all. Dad has picked her out. I never saw her, and what's more, I don't want to.

TOM. Unhappy man, I weep for you; that is, I would. But how different is your case from mine. Now my Flora would have me in a minute if it wasn't for her father having arranged, before his death, for her marriage with a booby of a cousin whom she has never seen. I'd like to find him, and strangle him.

HARRY (*after a moment's reflection; suddenly*). By Jove, Tom, you can save me. Yes, you can.

TOM. I?

HARRY. Cert'! The folks think you are this wretched

female. Continue to represent her, disgust them with her, and I am saved.

TOM. Well, I like that. When I am found out, as I shall be sure to be, what becomes of my visit?

HARRY. Oh, I'll fix that. Wouldn't you risk a week in the country for me?

TOM. Of course I would, but if my Flora should hear of it, she would give me the sack at once. If there is any one thing she particularly dislikes, it is masquerading.

HARRY. So do my parents; but you are safe enough; they'll never suspect. (*Aside.*) I rather think I won't tell him that Hepsibah is coming soon.

TOM. Yes, I'll do it. But, Harry, just fix that infernal bird-cage of mine, will you? It feels as if it was coming off. (HARRY *arranges pull-back; enter* MRS. B., L.)

MRS. B. Why, Harry, what are you doing? (*Tableau.*)

HARRY. I — I was just fixing cousin's dress here. She asked me to; didn't you?

MRS. B. Allow me to remark, miss, that, while I am glad to see you, I think such arrangements of costume might be more modestly left to me.

TOM. Oh, it was only my bustle, aunt; and then, I don't mind my cousin; nobody minds cousins.

HARRY. Besides, mother, "A bird on toast is worth two in the soup." But perhaps, as you are here, you will fix it.

MRS. B. Certainly. (*Tries to arrange dress.*) Well, I must say, these new-fangled notions ain't quite so easy. I do believe I can't do it.

HARRY. Never mind, tinker your own cage, Tom.

MRS. B. Tom? (*Tableau.*)

HARRY (*aside; confused*). Now I have done it!

TOM (*quickly*). Yes, didn't you know? I was just telling Harry. Father was awfully disappointed that I wasn't a boy. So, although mother would christen me Hepsibah, pa always called me Tom. You see?

MRS. B. Well, I am aware there is nothing particularly poetical about your front name; but while tomboys are bad enough, tomgirls are worse, and as long as you wear petticoats, I prefer that you should not be called Tom.

HARRY. All right, then, I won't. But come along to my den and fix your dress.

MRS. B. (*severely*). Harry! Your cousin will have the

spare chamber. There will be no necessity for your giving up your room. But can't you wait till after dinner?

TOM. Oh, I think so. I guess the thing is all right, anyhow.

MRS. B. Very well. Dinner will be ready soon.

(*Exit* L.)

TOM. I say, Harry, that was a narrow squeak. Don't be so careless. But I am dying for a smoke. Haven't you a cigarette?

HARRY. Yes, here they are. (*Producing case. They take cigarettes and light. Both sit on opposite sides of the table with feet upon it, chairs tipped back.*) By-the-way, Tom, you spoke of Flora. What's her name? Where does she live? Is she rich? Now go on. You can't be happier than when singing her praises. (*If* TOM *can play banjo, here is place to introduce that, or song, or both.*)

TOM. Oh, no. I am not in the mood.

(*Enter* MR. B., L.)

BR. Why, bless me! Hepsibah, what are you doing?

(*Tableau.*)

TOM (*he and* HARRY *both jumping*). I — that is — I why, you see, I am subject to very severe attacks of phthisic, and my doctor ordered me to smoke to relieve them.

BR. But that position?

HARRY. Oh, that's to change the blood current, you know. Take the pressure off the lungs, you see.

BR. (*doubtfully*). Um! P'raps so? But don't you find smoking as disagreeable as the phthisic?

TOM. Not at all. You see I inhale. (*Blowing cloud in his face.*)

BR. (*coughing*). Ahem! yes, I see, but I don't. Well, well, sit down. I am very glad to have you here, very glad. Your father was my favorite brother-in-law. (TOM *sits at table*, BR. *stands opposite*, HARRY R. F.)

TOM. Yes, I often heard him speak of you, especially when he was sick with rheumatics last winter.

BR. (*astonished*). Last winter! Why, it is five years since he was laid in the cold ground.

HARRY (*aside*). No wonder he had the rheumatics.

TOM (*confused*). Oh, yes, you mean my other father.

BR. Other father?

TOM. Yes. Didn't you know mother had married again?

BR. Married again? Why, she was in the lunatic asylum, I thought.

TOM (*to* HARRY; *aside*). Come, help me. I'm over my ears now.

HARRY. Why, father, cousin has told me more in five minutes than you have learned in five years. She was in the asylum, pronounced incurable, but a new physician came, performed an operation, perfectly tremendous — trephined — you know, took out a large piece of the skull, and — and —

TOM. Found a piece of a hair-pin actually embedded in the cineritious matter, at the anterior superior convolution of the cerebrum. (*Aside.*) Whew!

BR. Bless me! How wonderful, how wonderful!

TOM. But the curious part of it is, they put in a piece of zinc where they took the bone out. They couldn't put that back, you know, and every time she takes vinegar, it acts on the zinc, and makes her a perfect galvanic battery. Her arms and legs go jerking about, utterly uncontrollable. Why, it costs us five dollars for broken crockery every time we have pickles.

HARRY. Yes, sir, the Bell Telephone Company actually wanted to engage her for life.

BR. Wonderful, wonderful! And so she's married again? How could any one marry her?

TOM (*aside*). I think I'll go it a bit now. (*Aloud.*) Why, it was odd, very odd, but the way was this: Deacon Furbish called on her one evening — it was leap year — he was a very bashful man. He was talking of his lonely state when all of a sudden — they had been drinking lemonade — the battery began to work, and after cuffing the deacon's ears for five minutes, she embraced him convulsively, and the effects only passed off as Furbish screamed out, "I am thine." Ha, ha, ha!

HARRY (*convulsed*) Ha, ha, ha!

BR. Well, that is the strangest thing I ever heard of. (*Going to* L.; *calling.*) Mother, mother, just come and hear this. (*Enter* MRS. B., L.) Just listen to what happened to your sister, and you never knew it. Now tell her.

TOM (*coughing*). Oh, I've got the phthisic again. You tell, Harry.

MRS. B. Yes, tell me. What is it?

HARRY (*speaking rapidly*). Why, five years after she was laid in the cold ground —

BR. No, you mean *he* was laid in the cold ground.

HARRY. Yes, of course. He was trephined for rheumatics.

BR. (*interrupting*). No, no.

HARRY. And they found inside the brain a whole galvanic battery, and so they married her to Deacon Hairpin.

BR. Harry, Harry, that is all wrong.

TOM. Say, uncle, "hire a hall."

BR. "Hire a hall!" What for?

TOM. I mean "give us a rest."

MRS. B. Why certainly, my dear. Dinner is almost ready.

HARRY. Good enough! (*Theatrically.*) "Go on. I'll follow thee."

MRS. B. (*going; aside*). I must say I don't like that young woman very much. (*Exit* L. MR. B. *retires up.* HARRY *and* TOM *come to front.*)

TOM. I say, we shall never get through the day. Those parents nearly did the business. If I'd had to go back a generation I never could have done it.

HARRY. Oh, "keep a stiff upper lip." The worst is over.

TOM. Well, I hope so. But, Great Scott, haven't I a mouth on me? I suppose there's no such thing as getting a cobbler in this place?

MR. B. (*overhearing; coming down*). Cobbler? Oh, yes. Si Rugg is a very good one. Anything you wish? I'll send right around.

TOM. Thanks awfully. But I'm afraid he could not furnish the tap I want. Eh, Harry?

BR. Then, Harry, I'd like to have you come and help me a few minutes, if your cousin here will spare us.

TOM. Oh, certainly. (*Exeunt* HARRY *and* BR.)

(*Enter* MRS. B., L.)

MRS. B. There, now I've got a few minutes, I want to have a sober talk with you. Your father and Harry's have settled it that you are to marry one another. I don't believe in such matches myself, but never mind; that's their business. Tell me, what can you do? You've been to Vassar, and I've not a doubt, have plenty of book learnin', but that ain't all that's necessary to make life happy for you both. Now what can you do?

TOM. Oh, I can sing and play.

MRS. B. I mean with your hands. What can you make?

TOM. They say I make a pretty fair pitcher.

MRS. B. Make a pitcher. Well, that is something; what else?

TOM. Oh, I can pull a single scull.

MRS. B. I hope not, I hope not. Of course, you'll have your little tiffs, but I hope never resort to violence.

TOM. You don't understand. When I say single scull, I mean a boat. I can row a boat.

MRS. B. Umph! Well, as Harry isn't likely to be a lighthouse keeper, I don't see much good in that. Can you sew?

TOM (*forgetting and surprised*). Sew? Sew?

MRS. B. So, so! Well, that's better than not at all. Can you cook?

TOM. Cook? Well, no. That's a subject that's better understood at Yale than Vassar.

MRS. B. Oh, 'tis, is it? Well, I never did think much of male cooks.

TOM. Well, but, aunt, you know those things you speak of are relics of a by-gone age. (*Rising theatrically.*) Woman has a nobler sphere. Think of Anna Dickinson or Lucy Stone. Think of Mary Bashirtoff. Did they busy themselves with the petty details of domestic affairs? No, marm. I tell you, when the time comes, as come it will, when we shall see the result of the theory of the survival of the fittest, there will not be a man, not one, left upon the face of the earth. Think of it. Think of a whole world peopled with ambitious, progressive women.

MRS. B. My stars! I don't want to live then. All your ambitious, progressive women wouldn't make one grandfather, or a father, and I think fathers are convenient.

TOM (*orating*). Will you then tamely submit to the domination of an inferior class? Will you supinely serve, where you might command?

MRS. B. (*aside*). Laws-a-mercy! I do believe the girl's insane. She's got it from her mother with the battery. I'll just put a stop to this match, so I will. (*Exit* L.)

TOM. Ha, ha, ha! I rather think that fixed matters for Harry, and I think I'd better be off before I'm discovered. (*Goes up for hat.*)

(*Enter* FLORA, R.)

FLORA. Very strange that no one was at the train to meet me, and that I should be left to hire a private conveyance. Where can all the folks be? (*Seeing* TOM.) Ah! there's a young lady. I didn't know there was a daughter. (*Coughs.*) This is, I presume (TOM *turns; tableau.*) Mr. Burnham!

TOM (*confounded; coming front. Aside*). Flora, by all that is unlucky! I am ruined. No, I'll brazen it out. (*Aloud, falsetto.*) You asked me — ?

FLORA (*coldly*). Mr. Burnham, what does this mean?

TOM. Mr. Burnham? Excuse me, young lady. It apparently means that you have been drinking or had a sunstroke.

FLORA. Do you mean to tell me that you are not my friend Tom Burnham?

TOM. Beautiful but erratic female, allow me to state, such a question does not speak well for your friend, Mr. Burnham, whoever he may be. Is he in the habit of attiring himself in the costume which fashion has prescribed for *our* sex?

FLORA (*pointedly*). I trust not. If I should ever find he did, he'd be no longer friend of mine.

TOM (*aside*). How shall I ever get out of this?

FLORA. Then you are one of the family? This is your home?

TOM. Well, if consanguinity has any claims, I think I may say that this is my home. But perhaps you'll be kind enough to state your business.

FLORA. Can it be that you are one of the family, and do not know? My name is Flora H. Strong, or as they know me here, Hepsibah Strong, the misfortune of Hepsibah having been inflicted on me when I was too young to resist. I have been invited to make a visit here.

TOM (*aside*). The cousin, by jingo! This is growing interesting. (*Aloud.*) Ah, yes, of course, how stupid of me. Dear cousin, (*embraces her*) glad to see you. (*Kisses her several times.*) I'll go and tell the folks you've come. (*Kisses again.*) Now you stay right here. (*Going.*) I'll (*comes back, kiss*) be back directly. (*Exit* L.)

FLORA. Well, I must say my cousin is affectionate. But how very odd. I never saw such a marvellous resemblance. I was sure it was Tom. (*Thoughtfully.*) She kissed like Tom, too. But no, it can't be, of course.

(*Enter* MR. B., L.)

BR. Hepsibah! Hepsibah! (*Calling.*)

FLORA. Oh, there's uncle. Do call me Flora, Mr. Breed.

BR. (*seeing her; surprised*). Certainly, I'll call you Flora if you wish me to. Of course you know your own name, but I was looking for —

FLORA (*interrupting*). Your daughter has just gone to find you.

BR. Daughter? (*Aside.*) Oh, it's some friend of Hepsy's, who knows all about the marriage, and so speaks of her as my daughter. (*Aloud.*) My daughter, yes, that is, soon will be.

FLORA. Will be? I understood —

BR. (*interrupting*). Of course you did, of course you did. That's all right. No offence, no offence. Are you staying in the village?

FLORA. Well, I must say, for one who has been invited —

BR. (*interrupting*). Ah, yes. I didn't know —

FLORA. Didn't know? Didn't you write to your niece to come and spend several weeks with you?

BR. Certainly, certainly. (*Aside.*) I see Hepsy has invited her friend to make the visit with her. (*Aloud.*) You are right welcome. Lay off your things. How is your mother?

FLORA. Physically she seems very well, but she still suffers from her mental trouble. I only came from the asylum yesterday.

BR. Indeed, indeed, left the asylum yesterday? (*Starting.*) You haven't had an operation, have you? (*Trying to look at her head.*) Haven't a piece of zinc up there, have you? (*Retreating.*) If you have, you haven't been drinking vinegar, have you? Ain't liable to (*imitating jerking*) you know? (*Aside.*) 'Pon my word, she looks wild.

FLORA. What does he mean? Ah, I see. (*Touching forehead.*) Runs in the family, runs in the family — poor mother. I'm afraid uncle will join her soon.

(*Enter* HARRY, R.)

HARRY. Where has Tom gone? I can't find him anywhere. (*Seeing* FLORA.) The cousin, by jingo!

BR. Ah, Harry, let me introduce —

HARRY (*hastily*). Ah, yes. How de do? I heard you were coming. Been expecting you some time. (*Aside.*) She *is* pretty, by Jove.

FLORA (*aside*). Umph, he isn't so very bad, but then I can't give up Tom. (*Aloud.*) Our parents were such friends, we certainly ought to be.

BR. Our parents? Did I then ever have the pleasure —

HARRY (*interrupting*). Oh, don't you see? (*Takes him back; whispering.*)

FLORA. Poor uncle, he's very bad.

BR. (*coming down*). Ah, yes, I understand. I'll go at once. (HARRY *pushes him off* L.)

HARRY (*aside*). On the whole, I don't think I dislike this match so much. (*Aloud.*) My dear cousin, how very fetching you are this morning.

FLORA. Thank you, Mr. Breed.

HARRY. Isn't Mister a bit formal for cousins? What's the matter with Harry?

FLORA. But it is so dreadfully familiar on so short an acquaintance.

HARRY. Oh, but Hepsibah —

FLORA. There, there, it's a bargain. Don't call me that, and I'll call you Harry.

(*Enter* TOM *at back.*)

HARRY. All right, seal the bond. (*Kisses her.* TOM *shakes his fist.*) It was only to-day that I learned of our parents' wishes as to our future. I needn't tell you I was delighted. I fairly danced with joy.

TOM (*aside*). Oh, the villain!

FLORA. Excuse me, I am not so ready for this match. To be frank, my affections are already engaged.

HARRY. Oh, but give me a chance. Remember, obedience to our parents is our duty.

FLORA. Oh, but that was a mere whim when we were children. Besides, my mother's insane. I see your father is also not quite right, so it would be wicked to marry.

HARRY. Father insane? Oh, you are quite mistaken.

FLORA. Never mind, I couldn't do it. It would break poor Tom's heart.

HARRY. Tom? Tom who?

FLORA. Thomas Burnham. You must have seen him at Harvard.

HARRY. I knew him well. You don't mean that you are going to throw yourself away on him? (TOM *coughs; comes forward.*) Ah, Julia, this is Miss Strong.

TOM. Oh, yes, we've met before.

HARRY. Ah, well, I was just speaking of Tom Burnham. Why, he was notoriously the fastest man in college.

FLORA. Dear me!

HARRY. Oh, yes, billiards, theatre, and above all, a desperate flirt.

TOM. Harry, this is outrageous.

HARRY (*aside*). Keep quiet, or you are lost. (*To* FLORA.) You see, Julia is interested. She is very fond of Tom. In fact, thinks more of him than any one else. I shouldn't be surprised if they were one for life.

TOM. Harry, I'll not stand it. This is abominable!

FLORA. Don't excuse him. Don't mention him. Oh, the wretch! (*Crying.*)

TOM. Oh, I can't stand this.

HARRY (*aside*). Well, if you want to spoil all your chances! (*To* FLORA.) Now will you not promise to be mine?

FLORA. No, no! I'll never trust a man again. He swore he loved me, would never look at another girl, and now he's gone and engaged himself to somebody else. It's bigamy! (*Sits weeping.*)

TOM (*crosses to* FLORA). But I say, if you feel so bad, I'll make a sacrifice. I'll give him up. You may have him.

FLORA. What, take the cast-off of another girl? Never! I'll tear him from my heart. (*Takes out cabinet photo and tears it up.*) There, I'll never see him again as long as I live. Never! I won't!

TOM (*to* HARRY). You've made a nice mess for me, haven't you?

HARRY (*to* TOM). There, there, make the best of it, old man. You see you can't have her. I'll take her, and everybody will be happy.

TOM. No, I'll be hanged if you do! You're not the fawner for my Flora. Dear Miss Flora—

FLORA (*rising; drying eyes*). Don't speak to me. I hate you, because he loves you. I'll go home at once.

HARRY. Oh, no! Not at once.

TOM. Yes, I think she'd better go.

FLORA. Then I won't. (*Sitting.*)

TOM. Very well, if you won't go, I will. (*Going.*)

FLORA. No, you shan't! I'll go myself. Harry, tell your father that circumstances over which I had no control compel me to abandon my intended visit. (*Going.*)

(*Enter* MRS. B., *flour on face, etc.*, L.)

MRS. B. What's that? Abandon your visit? No, no! We've plenty of room. Father's told me all about you. Now do try and make yourself comfortable.

FLORA (*relenting*). Well, if you insist.

MRS. B. Insist? Of course I do. (*Aside.*) Now if Harry would only take her, and let this crazy cousin go.

(*Enter* MR. B., R.)

BR. Well, I've found you at last, have I? I've hunted the whole house over for you. Hepsibah, it wasn't quite right for you to go off and leave your friend all alone.

FLORA. Leave my friend all alone?

BR. No, not you. I was speaking to Hepsibah here.

FLORA. Hepsibah? I thought her name was Julia?

HARRY (*quickly*). So it is. Hepsibah Julia.

MRS. B. Not to mention Tom, "as her father always used to call her."

HARRY (*looking to window; trying to change the subject*). But I say, aren't we going to have a shower?

TOM (*aside*). A full-grown thunder-storm, if I'm any judge.

BR. No, no. It is perfectly clear.

FLORA. Not to me, at any rate. There's some mystery here, or this is Bedlam. (*To* TOM.) You say your name is Hepsibah Julia Breed?

BR. (*trying to pacify her*). No, no! She is a Strong.

FLORA. I don't care if she is, so am I. Now, sir, if you have a lucid interval, I should like to know why you have never told me that you had a daughter.

BR. Why? Why! Bless me, because I never had one. (*Aside.*) The battery is beginning to work.

TOM. There, you hear. He never had a daughter.

HARRY. Yes, yes, he never had a daughter. (*Trying to change the subject again.*) Don't you think you'd better shut the windows? I think there's going to be a breeze.

TOM (*aside*). So do I. A regular snorter.

BR. Oh, nonsense. But, by-the-way, Hepsy, you haven't introduced us to your friend.

TOM. *My* friend? Mine?

BR. Yes, she asked me to call her Flora, but Flora what?

HARRY. Well, that is a floorer!

FLORA (*to* MRS. B.). You know me, auntie, don't you? When uncle gets better he will.

MRS. B. Auntie? Uncle? Get better?

BR. There, I told you I thought she was crazy still. Only yesterday out of the asylum. It's dreadful!

TOM. Perfectly awful.

BR. (*to* TOM). You'd better keep away from her.

MRS. B. (*soothingly*). Poor thing, poor thing! Did you think I was your auntie?

FLORA. Think you were my aunt? If your name is Hannah Breed, and mine Flora Strong, I most certainly do.

MRS. B. Flora Strong? Flora Hepsibah Strong?

FLORA. Yes.

BR. Oh, she's mad.

FLORA. No, I am not mad, but soon shall be mighty mad, if I don't get some explanation. Here's your letter inviting me to visit you. (*Producing letter.*)

BR. (*taking it*). So it is. (*To* TOM.) But who are you?

MRS. B. Yes, who are you?

TOM. Why — I —

FLORA. Now tell the truth.

HARRY. Yes, out with it. The game is up.

TOM. Well, I am Harry's chum, Tom Burnham.

FLORA (*ironically*). Pardon me. You've either been drinking or had a sunstroke, beautiful but erratic female.

TOM. But, Flora —

FLORA. I know Mr. Burnham well, and I know that he would never indulge in masquerading like this, unless perhaps for some noble purpose.

TOM. But that's just why I did.

ALL. How? Explain.

TOM (*rapidly*). Why, I wanted to marry you; you wanted to marry me; Harry wanted to marry nobody — the governor here wanted Harry to marry — well, you see how it was, I interfered in the interests of true love.

BR. Then your mother's — no, I mean her mother's marriage with Mr. Furbish is all gammon?

TOM. Yes, sir, "furbished" up for the occasion.

MRS. B. And she hasn't any zinc in her head?

HARRY. No more than I have. But, Flora, since you have cast Tom off, shall we consider ourselves engaged?

TOM. Oh, Flora, do forgive me this once. 'Twas all for your good, you know. I'll never get into petticoats again, and you — you may wear the (*indicating trousers*) all our wedded life.

FLORA. Well, so be it. Uncle, you'll have to give me up.

BR. Well, I suppose I must. Eh, mother?

MRS. B. I always said so.

HARRY. So did I.

Br. Then bless you, my daughters — I mean my nieces — I mean — anyhow, bless you, bless you.

Tom. Then we are forgiven? (*Coming forward.*) Need we ask forgiveness here, can you forgive all the shortcomings of these College Chums?

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